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THE WORLD'S BEST NEWS & FACTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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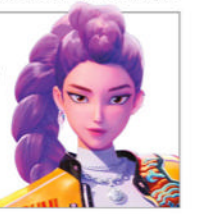


September 19, 2025 • Vol. 6, Issue 283 • $5.99

Making sense of the world

THE WEEK Junior

THE BEST MAGAZINE FOR CURIOUS KIDS

MOTHER NATURE

Announcing the winners of our fifth annual photo contest! p12

GRAND PRIZE
Ages 11-14
FINN

In Finn's words:
"This is a picture of a female tree swallow feeding her young a mayfly. She does this visit in a matter of seconds."

DID YOU KNOW?
In 1947, the CDC paid $10 for the land in Atlanta, Georgia, where it has its headquarters.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

History of the CDC

The CDC was created in 1946 as the Communicable Disease Center. With fewer than 400 employees, its initial mission was to stop malaria, a disease spread by mosquitoes, in the US. After achieving that goal, it expanded to include other communicable (spread by people) diseases, adopting its current name in 1970.

Vaccine debate erupts across US

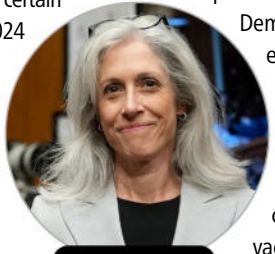
After major upheaval at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, the US health protection agency), debates over vaccines broke out in the federal government and across the US.

What vaccines are being debated?

Most of the disagreement concerns vaccines given to prevent diseases such as chickenpox, measles, flu, and Covid-19. US vaccine policies and recommendations are set by the CDC, which is traditionally run by scientists and doctors and overseen by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Recommendations are based on scientific research, and states typically follow them. All states have had vaccine mandates since the 1980s. In most places, children cannot be enrolled in public school unless they have had certain vaccines, with few exceptions. In a 2024 report, the CDC said routine vaccinations have prevented about 508 million illnesses in US children born between 1994 and 2023.

What happened at the CDC?

The current head of HHS is Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who has made statements against vaccines before and after President Donald Trump appointed him to the job this year. In June, Kennedy removed 17 members of an independent panel that advises the CDC on vaccines and replaced some with people who are skeptical of vaccines. On August 27, he said Covid-19 vaccines would be available only to people at high risk and not for groups like healthy children. The same day, Kennedy fired CDC head Susan Monarez for, her lawyers said, refusing to approve "unscientific, reckless directives and fire dedicated health experts." Her dismissal prompted four high-level CDC officials to resign in protest, and lawmakers, scientists, former CDC directors, and former and current HHS employees called for Kennedy to resign.



Susan Monarez

What happened in Congress?

The Senate (half of Congress, the branch of government that makes laws) called Kennedy to testify about the upheaval at the CDC on September 4. Both Republicans and Democrats engaged in heated exchanges with him. Bill Cassidy, a Republican senator and doctor, said the new policies were "denying people vaccines." Kennedy replied that "everybody can get access" to Covid-19 vaccines for free, though he did not clarify how, given the new restrictions. He denied being against childhood vaccines but called for more research into the risks. "I think parents should be free to make their own choices," Kennedy said. He also said he fired the members of the CDC committee because they had financial conflicts of interest, not because of their beliefs about vaccines.

What are states doing?

On September 3, Joseph Ladapo, Florida's surgeon general (top doctor), said the state would be the first to end requirements for all childhood vaccines. "People have a right to make their own decisions," he said. It was later clarified that the only vaccines that are no longer required are for chickenpox, flu, meningitis, and hepatitis B. Many state lawmakers criticized the decision. Anna Eskamani, a Florida leader, said it would "open the door to outbreaks of preventable diseases."

Also on September 3, California, Oregon, and Washington said they had formed the West Coast Health Alliance to align their vaccine policies based on the "best available science." Hawaii joined them on September 4. The group said the changes at the CDC have "impaired the agency's capacity to prepare the nation for public health challenges." The CDC said its recommendations are "based on rigorous evidence and gold standard science."

What will happen next?

Florida's plan to end vaccine mandates will take effect in 90 days. Meanwhile, states including Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey are taking steps to ensure that vaccines are available to their residents and are considering forming a group similar to the West Coast alliance.

Largest iceberg is breaking up

The largest and oldest iceberg in the world, known as A23a, will soon disappear for good, according to experts from the British Antarctic Survey (BAS). The iceberg, which broke off from Antarctica's Filchner-Ronne Ice Shelf in 1986, will fracture into smaller pieces and melt away over the next few weeks or months.

After A23a initially broke off, it got stuck on the floor of the Weddell Sea in Antarctica for 30 years. The "megaberg" started moving again in 2020 but became trapped in a twirling column of water last year, where it stayed until recently. Scientists believe it has been breaking up from below as warmer waters have reached it.

In January, A23a covered 1,418 square miles, about the size of Rhode Island. Now, however, it has shrunk to about 656 square miles—about the size of Houston, Texas. Scientists said this is part of an iceberg's normal lifespan and is not related to climate change. "It is kind of a big, spectacular thing that our planet does as part of day-to-day operations," one expert said.

A23a in 2024

RECORD FOR RECORDS
Ashrita Furman of New York set a world record for most Guinness World Records, with more than 200.

Harry Sperl holds the title for the largest collection of hamburger-related items.

Guinness records celebrates 70 years

The organization that tracks record-setting achievements around the globe—Guinness World Records (GWR)—is celebrating 70 years in 2025. To mark the anniversary, GWR has identified 70 records that have not yet been set that people can attempt.

The idea for GWR came about in 1951, after a man named Hugh Beaver, who ran the Guinness Brewery in Ireland, argued with friends about which European game bird was fastest. Unable to find a book that held the answer, Beaver hired twin brothers and researchers Norris and Ross McWhirter to create one. The first Guinness Book of Records was published on August 27, 1955, and sold 187,000 copies.

Today, more than 155 million GWR books have been sold worldwide, and the organization recognizes 68,523 confirmed world records. Anyone can apply to set a record, and there are many just for kids under 16. GWR says it receives more than 1,000 record applications each week. Every attempt requires an independent witness and video or photographic evidence.

Among the unclaimed records GWR is promoting for its anniversary are the fastest time to make a pasta necklace, most balloons blown up in one minute, most treats balanced on a dog's nose in 30 seconds, and most high fives in 30 seconds. "I'm really grateful for the chance to meet so many inspiring people and curate their most amazing achievements," said Craig Glenday, the editor in chief of GWR. "And the future is sure to be as thrilling, so I can't wait to see what's coming next!"

IT'S AN AMAZING WEEK FOR...

BEING A BOOK LOVER

Waterstones, a UK bookstore chain, plans to open 10 new shops per year because younger adults are embracing reading and driving up sales. "This is about people wanting to read and talk about books," said the head of the chain.

A store in the UK

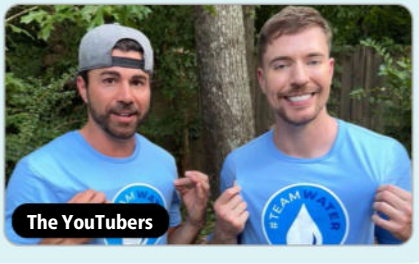
A TEAM CAT

Football players at Bowling Green State University in Ohio have a popular new teammate—but he doesn't take the field. Pudge, a shorthair Siamese owned by player George Carlson, has gone viral as the team's locker room pet. Carlson said Pudge puts a smile on people's faces and he "wanted to share that joy."

Pudge

SURPASSING A GOAL

YouTubers MrBeast and Mark Rober set a goal of raising $40 million in one month to help provide clean water to millions of people around the world—then blew right past it, bringing in $41.5 million. Thanking donors, the famous content creators said, "From $1 to $1 million, every donation made a difference."



The YouTubers

ON THE COVER: FINN: GETTY IMAGES; US OPEN: NETFLIX; ON THIS PAGE: GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS; GETTY IMAGES (2); CNN. COM; MRBEAST; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES; OREGON.GOV; CDC

AMAZING ANIMALS
In the early 1800s, at least 30 million wild bison roamed vast areas of North America.

A herd of bison in Yellowstone National Park

The first national park

Yellowstone, established in 1872, is the world's first national park. At 3,472 square miles, it spans three states (Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho). It has 10,000 hydrothermal features, including 500 active geysers, and is home to 300 species of birds and 67 species of mammals. More than 4 million people visited in 2024.

Bison improve Yellowstone ecosystem

New research has found that free-roaming bison are improving the ecosystem in Yellowstone National Park. In particular, the park's grasses and soil are benefiting, which in turn helps other plants and animals survive.

Why were bison studied?

After bison became nearly extinct in the late 1800s, Yellowstone is now one of the few places in North America where the animals can continuously roam the land. About 5,000 bison live in Yellowstone, and they travel about 1,000 miles a year, moving back and forth along a 50-mile migration route. While they roam, the bison graze on plants and grasses. Researchers wanted to measure the impact the bison were having on the soil and vegetation on the route. They took monthly soil samples from 16 locations, focusing on grasslands in the park's northern river valleys, for about seven years. These samples were then compared to soil from sites the bison didn't access.

What were the findings?

The study found that the bison's grazing increased the volume of microbes (living things too small to be seen with the naked eye) in the soil. The soil became more nutrient-rich, which boosted the nutritional quality of the plants that grew in it. This helped other animals in Yellowstone who ate those plants. At the same time, the bison were not found to be overgrazing, a practice that reduces soil quality and plant growth. "The return of a large-scale bison migration provides clear benefits to the ecosystem," said Jerod Merkle, a study author.

Why is this significant?

The findings underscore something Native Americans, who consider bison to be sacred, have known for many years. "Buffalo helped shape this continent," Troy Heinert, a member of the Rosebud Sioux tribe who oversees bison management for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, told *The New York Times*. "The more buffalo that are out there, the ecosystems are improved for all other animals as well."

What will happen next?

Scientists will continue to study the effects migratory bison can have on ecosystems. Wildlife experts will also advocate for more of the nation's land to be made available for bison herds to roam freely.

WORD OF THE WEEK

BIBLIOPHILE

If you love books and enjoy reading, you can call yourself a "bibliophile," a name that comes from two Greek words: *biblion*, which means book, and *philos*, which means "loving." The same *biblion* also gave us the word "bibliography," which means a list of books on a particular subject.

THE WEEK IN HISTORY

September 18, 1851
The New York Times begins publishing

On September 18, 1851, the first edition of *The New York Times* was published under its original name, the *New-York Daily Times*. The first edition, which was four pages long and cost one cent, contained stories about an election in France and the travels of President Millard Filmore (1850–1853). Today, the newspaper has nearly 12 million digital and print subscribers around the world.

New-York Daily Times.

The first edition

The Pentagon, US defense headquarters

Defense department renamed

President Donald Trump signed an order to change the name of the Department of Defense (agency overseeing the military and national security) to the Department of War (its name until 1947). The new name will be secondary, the White House said, since a formal change requires approval from Congress. Trump said the new name had a "stronger sound." Critics said the change will be expensive to implement and focuses too much on war.

Butter statue is recycled

An 800-pound *Wizard of Oz*–themed butter sculpture at the state fair in Syracuse, New York, has been turned into renewable energy. Using a digester machine, the methane gas produced by the butter during the fair was combined with food waste and manure to generate electricity that will power homes.

The sculpture

June Cleaver to heading to the sea

Sea turtle makes full recovery

Marine biologists released June Cleaver, a 230-pound loggerhead turtle, into the Atlantic Ocean from a Florida beach on September 3. The turtle, named for a character in the classic TV show *Leave It to Beaver*, had spent two months recovering at the Brevard Zoo Sea Turtle Healing Center after being hit by a boat in June. About 300 people cheered her on as she returned to the sea.

KPop Demon Hunters

FUN FILMS
A Minecraft Movie is the biggest box office winner this year in the US, followed by Lilo & Stitch in second place.

KPop movie is a surprise success

The animated action musical *KPop Demon Hunters* has surprisingly become one of the biggest film hits of 2025. It made its premiere on Netflix on June 20 and is now the platform's most streamed film of all time.

The film follows musical superstars Rumi, Mira, and Zoey, voiced by actors Arden Cho, May Hong, and Ji-young Yoo. The characters form a K-pop trio. (K-pop is Korean pop music.) Offstage, they live a secret life as demon hunters, working to stop evil. When a boy band's members turn out to be demons, the girls must stop them.

When *KPop Demon Hunters* was released, Netflix expected the audience to be mostly kids and families. But the movie gained a wider following as viewership expanded across all ages. The film contributed to a nearly 9% increase in Netflix viewership during its release month—an all-time high for the platform. In response to its popularity, Netflix released a sing-along version of the film in 1,750 North American theaters from August 22 to 24. The film became the top-grossing movie that weekend, with sold-out screenings.

The soundtrack also reached the top 10 on the Billboard 200 chart, with the song "Golden" hitting number one. Other songs that made the top 10 include "Your Idol," "Ordinary," and "Soda Pop."

Critics have praised the film's mix of action, music, and cultural authenticity.

The film's voice actors (from left): Ji-young Yoo, Arden Cho, and May Hong

Maggie Kang, a co-director, said the team worked hard to make the movie "feel as Korean as possible." There are Korean-language lines in the songs, and the characters use Korean pronunciation of English words, she said.

"It's so exciting and rare to have Korean leads," Cho, the voice of Rumi, told *Good Morning America*. Even though the film is culturally specific, it tells a story about teamwork that everyone can relate to, she said. An official announcement for a sequel has not been made, but Cho said she hopes there will be one.

THE WEEK'S SILLIEST HEADLINE

"Sweet-toothed bear breaks into California ice cream shop" *UPI*

NETFLIX; RICKY MIDDLESWORTH/NETFLIX; GETTY IMAGES; AMERICAN DAIRY ASSOCIATION NORTH EAST; JOHN RAOUX; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (3); PUBLIC DOMAIN/NYT

Around the world

London, United Kingdom
Landmark nominated for award

A renovation to Elizabeth Tower, a 166-year-old clock tower also known as Big Ben, has been nominated for the Royal Institute of British Architects Stirling Prize, the UK's top architecture award. Judges called the upgrade, completed in 2022, a "masterclass in conservation and craftsmanship." Changes included adding an elevator and energy-efficient lights and restoring the clock to its original colors. The winner will be announced on October 16.

Jamaica
Prime minister wins third term

Jamaican prime minister Andrew Holness has been voted into power for a third term. Although opponents have accused him of dishonesty and wasteful spending, Holness has been credited with reducing crime and improving the country's economy. His party, the Jamaica Labour Party, also promised to lower income taxes, which are collected from most workers to help pay for government services. About 39% of eligible citizens voted.

Darfur, Sudan
Rain causes landslide

The village of Tarasin in the Darfur region of Sudan was destroyed after heavy rain caused a landslide on August 31. The Sudan Liberation Movement/Army, which controls the area, estimates that up to 1,000 people may have died. Aid groups have sent donkeys across the steep, muddy terrain to deliver food, supplies, rescue workers, and medical care for survivors.

Paris, France
Leader replaced

Defense minister Sébastien Lecornu, age 39, was named France's new prime minister after the government collapsed for the second time in nine months. Lecornu replaced François Bayrou, who failed to pass a budget plan, then lost a confidence vote, which meant lawmakers didn't want him to continue in the role.

Argentina
Artwork recovered

An 18th-century painting that was stolen about 80 years ago has been found in Argentina. The painting, titled *Portrait of a Lady*, is by Italian artist Giuseppe Ghislandi. It went missing after the Nazis (German political party led by Adolf Hitler in the 1930s and 1940s) stole it from a Dutch art dealer. The portrait was discovered in the home of Patricia Kadgien, whose father worked for the Nazis, when a reporter saw it in a photo advertising the house for sale.

GETTY IMAGES (7); SHUTTERSTOCK (2); REUTERS

Around the world

Greece's average age is rising.

Greece
Plan to increase birth rate

The Greek government has announced measures to reward people for becoming parents. Experts think the high cost of living is discouraging adults from having children, and Greece is now on track to have the oldest population in Europe. By reducing taxes for parents, they hope to raise the birth rate so there will be more young Greeks in the future.

Prince Hisahito

Tokyo, Japan
Japanese prince starts royal life

A ceremony took place at Tokyo's Imperial Palace to mark the beginning of Prince Hisahito's life as a royal adult. The 19-year-old nephew of Emperor Naruhito is second in line for the throne, after his father. He has older sisters, but only males can be the head of the royal family in Japan. The ceremony was delayed for a year after the prince's 18th birthday so he could focus on school. He studies biology and has done research on dragonflies.

Part of the parade

Hanoi, Vietnam
National Day celebrations held

Vietnam celebrated National Day on September 2, marking 80 years since the country declared its independence from French rule in 1945. The celebrations included a military parade through the capital, Hanoi, with thousands of spectators wearing red and waving flags. As part of the festivities, the government announced that it would give every citizen 100,000 dong (about $3.79).

Protesters in Kathmandu

Kathmandu, Nepal
Social media ban lifted

Nepal lifted a ban on social media platforms, including Facebook and YouTube, after at least 19 people died in protests. Officials said the platforms had failed to register with the government, but protesters said the ban was designed to stop people from criticizing the government online. Thousands of people clashed with security forces, and the parliament building was set on fire.

New South Wales, Australia
A national park for koalas

The government of New South Wales has announced plans to create one of the state's largest national parks. On September 8, logging (cutting down trees) was banned across a 435,000-acre area of forest, which will be connected with existing parks to create a 1.2-million-acre reserve called the Great Koala National Park. The reserve will protect about 12,000 koalas and more than 100 other species that are at risk in the state.

A koala

Are fruit sandwiches a good idea?

A traditional, picture-perfect Japanese snack has gone viral in the US.

What you need to know

- **Fruit sandwiches, also known as "fruit sandos," are a popular snack in Japan, where they're called "furutsu sando."**
- **They're made with a sweetened bread called milk bread, whipped cream, and seasonal fruit like strawberries, kiwi, and oranges.**
- **In the US, they're now very popular on social media and in grocery stores, restaurants, and snack shops.**
- **Fruit sandos were introduced at the HEB grocery chain in Texas earlier this year and regularly sell out.**

FUN FACT Strawberries, the only fruit with seeds on the outside, have about 200 seeds each.

Legend has it that the sandwich was invented in 1762, when the Earl of Sandwich, an English nobleman, asked for his meal to be served between slices of bread so he wouldn't have to stop his card game to eat it. Today, the sandwich is a mainstay on menus around the world, served at all hours of the day and night. There's an endless variety, including grilled cheese, gourmet subs, and even the Australian spaghetti jaffle, which is a sandwich of...you guessed it...spaghetti in tomato sauce. For the most part, sandwiches are savory, but now a sweet variety filled with fruit and whipped cream is a huge hit. What do you think? Are fruit sandwiches a good idea?

Yes—they're a creative treat

Fruit sandwiches are a work of genius. They're a main course and a dessert wrapped up in one. You don't have to wait to finish the savory part of your meal first—you can just dive right into the sweets. Besides, fruit sandos contain real fruit that's in season and at peak freshness. Even though it's between two slices of bread, it still counts toward our daily intake of fresh fruits and vegetables, which is important for good health. And fruit sandos were inspired by the Japanese furutsu sando. It's a good idea to borrow tasty traditions, try new things, and learn from other cultures, and food is an excellent way to do so.

No—leave a good thing alone

Fruit sandos might look pretty in pictures, but they're really not the best way to enjoy beautiful, seasonal fruit. Strawberries, kiwis, and other fruits are at their best when they're served as fresh as possible, not cut up, stuffed between bread slices, and left to sit. And what's wrong with classic savory sandwiches filled with meat and cheese, hummus, or veggies? They're substantial and filling. A fluffy sandwich of strawberries and cream won't fill you up the same way. Besides, a fruit sandwich is just confusing. Meals are supposed to start savory and end with something sweet. Sandwiches are good. Fruit is good. Just eat them separately.

YES Three reasons fruit sandwiches are a good idea

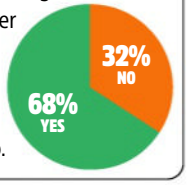
1. **They're a main course and dessert rolled into one. What could be better?**
2. **Fresh, seasonal fruit is delicious and good for us, and that doesn't change just because it's in a sandwich.**
3. **The idea is borrowed from a popular Japanese food. It's good to learn from other cultures and try new dishes.**

NO Three reasons fruit sandwiches are not a good idea

1. **Fruit is better when it's served fresh, not chopped up and left to sit for a while.**
2. **Savory sandwiches are true classics, and they fill you up in a way fruit and cream sandwiches simply can't.**
3. **Meals are meant to begin with something savory and end with something sweet. It's better to eat food in order.**

LAST ISSUE'S POLL

Last issue, we asked if students should be graded on effort. Most of you thought hard work should matter in school: 68% said yes, and 32% said no.



What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit kids.theweekjunior.com/polls so you can vote in our debate. Vote YES if you think fruit sandwiches are a good idea or NO if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.

GETTY IMAGES

Chasing big dreams

Before becoming co-anchor of *CBS Mornings* and host of *NFL Slimetime* on Nickelodeon, Nate Burleson spent 11 seasons in the NFL as a wide receiver for the Minnesota Vikings, Seattle Seahawks, and Detroit Lions. He spoke to *The Week Junior* about his career journey.

Did you always want to be on TV?
Yes, from the moment I set my eyes on a television set. I was the kid sitting crisscross in front of the TV, imagining myself as a game show host or analyst. I especially looked up to local news anchors.

The NFL Today

When did you start playing football?
Around age 8 or 9, but I didn't like it at first. I was skinny, hated getting hit, and quit more than once. I found my groove in high school and then college.

What lessons did football teach you?
On the field we share one goal: to win. That's how I approach my work now. We all come from different places, but we're here to do our best and help the team shine.

How did you move into TV?
While I was still playing, I'd visit the NFL Network during the off-season to get in front of the camera, and I did the NFL's broadcast boot camp. After I retired, I began working with the NFL Network.

What are some of your top moments on *CBS Mornings*?
Interviewing President Obama and Lady Gaga was huge. I also swam with sharks and trained with the Secret Service.

Do you like hosting *NFL Slimetime*?
Yes, I love being 12-year-old goofball Nate and working with my daughter, Mia Pearl.

What advice do you have for kids?
Chase your goals and be relentless.

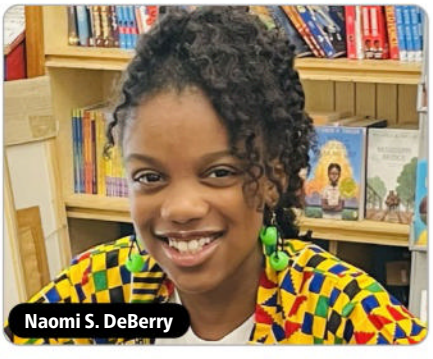
Nate Burleson

SPORTS STAR
Nate Burleson is the only player in NFL history with three punt returns of more than 90 yards.

Taking center stage

Singer-songwriter Kris Kollins will play the lead in the upcoming stage adaptation of *Purple Rain*. It is based on the 1984 film inspired by the life of rock legend Prince (1958–2016). Prince played the Kid, a rising musician facing family struggles and rivalries, and also created the film's acclaimed soundtrack. Kollins, who was cast as the Kid through a nationwide social media search, will be making his acting debut. *Purple Rain* will make its pre-Broadway premiere in Prince's hometown of Minneapolis, Minnesota, on October 16.

Kris Kollins


Naomi S. DeBerry

A brave young writer

Naomi S. DeBerry, a 12-year-old advocate and author, was named one of *Time* magazine's Girls of the Year 2025 for raising awareness of organ donation (when a damaged organ is replaced with a healthy one through a transplant). When DeBerry was about 6, her father received a kidney from their cousin Aisha DeBerry. The experience inspired DeBerry to write her first children's book, *My Daddy Needs a Gift*, to help other kids who are facing a family health crisis. "If there's something you feel is important," she told *Time*, "don't be afraid to talk about it."

OVERHEARD

"I'm cooking for myself, I'm making all those decisions. I don't have my mom around to cook every meal, although I would love that."
Katie Ledecky, US swimming champion and nine-time Olympic gold medalist, on fueling herself while training

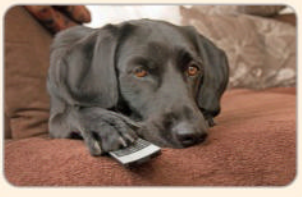
GETTY IMAGES (3); JON HANKS; COURTESY OF THE DEBERRY FAMILY

WOW! Male platypuses are some of the world's only venomous mammals. They produce venom in their hind legs.

Moss the Labrador retriever on the job

Dogs' taste in TV varies

A new study revealed that dogs respond differently to TV content, depending on their personality. According to the survey of 453 US pet owners, more excitable dogs tended to react to seeing moving objects or animals on screen, while anxious pups responded to hearing sounds, like doorbells.



Paddleboarding dogs help platypuses

Dogs may have a new best friend: the platypus. Conservationists in Australia have been training dogs to use paddleboards to track down these elusive mammals in the hopes of studying and saving the species.

Found only in eastern and southeastern Australia, platypuses are some of the most unusual mammals on Earth. They have webbed feet and a duck-like bill, lay eggs, and live in rivers, lakes, and streams. Experts worry that the animals are in danger of becoming extinct because their habitat is shrinking. But platypuses are difficult to study because they prefer to be active at night and spend most of their time in burrows or in the water.

A platypus swimming

The Healesville Sanctuary, a zoo that specializes in animals native to Australia, has trained dogs to use their keen sense of smell to locate hard-to-find species. The Dog Squad, as the pups are called, have helped experts find critically endangered creatures such as Baw Baw frogs. The Dog Squad has been carefully trained not to disturb the animals. Once a dog detects its target, it simply sits and points its nose in the right direction.

Now researchers have trained two dogs, a Labrador retriever named Moss and a Kelpie mix named Pip, to sniff out platypuses. Since platypuses spend so much time in water, the dogs have learned to ride a paddleboard.

Wearing safety vests, the dogs excel at their job. Handlers say the biggest challenge was keeping the pups calm and balanced on the water, even when they got the "zoomies" from excitement. The dogs now silently alert the team when platypuses are nearby, taking care not to scare the creatures away. They have even discovered the entrances to platypus burrows that humans were previously unable to access.

Scientists say this new way of tracking platypuses with the use of paddleboards has been a "game changer" for research. By figuring out where and how the platypuses live, experts can better understand how to protect these rare egg-laying mammals. "Platypus is such a unique species," said La Toya Jamieson, one of the wildlife detection dog officers. "It's so critical that we protect not only them but also their environment."

PLACE OF THE WEEK

Table Mountain National Park, South Africa

Stretching over 43 miles of mountains, trees, shrubland, and white sand beaches near the city of Cape Town, Table Mountain National Park is one of South Africa's most visited parks. It is part of the Cape Floral Kingdom, a region that supports nearly 20% of plant life in Africa. Many local species, including the Peninsula sundew plant and the Table Mountain ghost frog, are found here and almost nowhere else. Tourists often enjoy hiking, scuba diving, and visiting the rare land-based colony of African penguins in nearby Simon's Town.

Penguins in Simon's Town

SOFT SPOTS
There are about 10,000 species of sponges in the Earth's oceans.

Sea sponges (left) can be useful to dolphins.

Dolphins wear sponges on their noses

Researchers have seen dolphins in Western Australia "wearing" sea sponges on their noses to help them find food. Sponges are underwater animals that don't have any organs.

Scientists saw bottlenose dolphins in Shark Bay picking up sponges and "wearing" them on their snouts. The dolphins used the sponges to stir up sand on the seabed, which helped them find fish buried in the sand while protecting their snouts from getting scratched by rocks. Once they found food, they dropped the sponge to eat the fish, then picked up the sponge again and continued on their way. About 5% of Shark Bay's dolphins were seen using the technique, which scientists call "sponging."

Holding a sponge while hunting isn't a perfect solution, though—it can affect the dolphins' ability to use echolocation, a method of locating objects by making sound waves and listening for their echoes. The sponge "has a muffling effect" on sound, researcher Ellen Rose Jacobs explained. This makes it harder for the dolphins to navigate, she said, but they "can still learn how to compensate."

Animal of the week: Bighorn sheep

Experts are working to restore Texas' population of bighorn sheep, which has dropped by 50% in five years because of disease. They are capturing sheep from a healthy herd and moving them to isolated mountains where they are safer from infection.

- **LIFE SPAN:** 15 to 20 years
- **HABITAT:** Grassy slopes and rocky cliffs
- **SIZE:** Up to 130 pounds for females, 319 for males
- **DIET:** Grasses, clover, sedges, woody plants
- **FUN FACT:** When competing males clash their horns, the sound can be heard a mile away.

Good week / Bad week

Yellowstone's aspen trees

In Yellowstone National Park, the reintroduction of wolves has helped reduce the population of elk, which eat young aspen trees. In a recent study, scientists found new patches of tall, healthy aspen saplings in many parts of the park.

Fungi

Experts say that Earth's underground networks of fungi, which humans depend on for crop and soil health, need more help. Less than 10% of areas with diverse types of fungi are protected, according to a new study.

Ask an expert: "Can an iguana change into a wild pattern?" R., 8, California

Stephany Hernandez
Reptile and amphibian care supervisor, Cameron Park Zoo

Iguanas cannot change their color or pattern in the way chameleons do, but they can show slight changes due to temperature, mood, stress, or health. They may become darker to absorb more heat, get more vibrant in color to attract mates, or develop more noticeable patterns as they age.

A Fiji banded iguana

Do you have a question for an animal expert? Send it to *hello@theweekjunior.com*. Find out more about the Cameron Park Zoo at cameronparkzoo.com.

ALAMY (3); GETTY IMAGES (3); ON LEFT PAGE: RICK HAMMOND ZOOS VICTORIA; GETTY IMAGES (4)

Our contest winners!

More than 1,800 young photographers entered *The Week Junior*'s fifth annual Nature Photo Contest this year, submitting striking images of landscapes, trees, flowers, and animals. Every photograph they sent in showed a clear appreciation of the natural world, as well as creativity, curiosity, and skill.

The contest was divided into two categories: one for children ages 8 to 10 and one for ages 11 to 14. It was judged by Editorial Director Andrea Barbalich, Creative Director Dean Abatemarco, Photo Editors Nataki Hewling and Lily Alt, and award-winning professional photographers Jesse Burke, Angela Ledyard, and Ami Vitale.

The judges faced the difficult task of selecting 10 finalists in each age category, then a grand prize winner and two runners-up in each group. "We were so impressed with all the fantastic submissions that it was tough to narrow them down to the finalists and winners," Abatemarco said. "The children showed so much creativity and love for nature in their work. Well done!"

GRAND PRIZE WINNER
SIMON
Age 10

▶"Home Is Where You Make It"

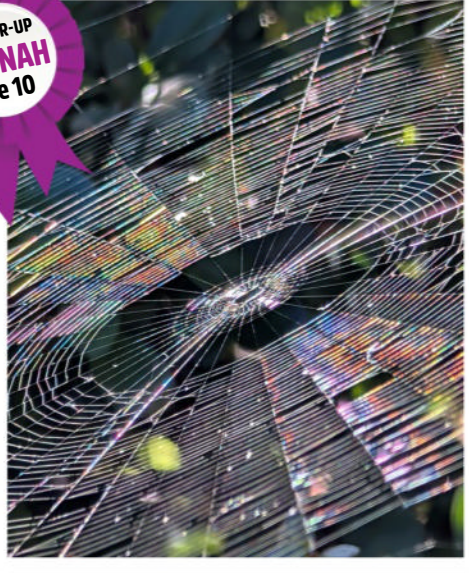
"Simon's photograph brings the viewer right into the world of the grasshopper. The lighting is beautifully handled, revealing the intricate textures of the insect's body, the delicate patterns on its wings, and its eyes that give the image a sense of personality. There's a striking contrast between the sharp detail of the insect and the soft petals of the flowers. A combination of patience, careful observation, and technical skill turn a common insect into a memorable portrait." —*Ami Vitale*

RUNNER-UP
JULIAN
Age 10

▲"Dogbane Beetle"

"This photo of a Dogbane beetle on a leaf really shows off the insect's shiny, metallic colors. The fine lines of the leaf gently guide the viewer's eyes toward the beetle. This also works like a natural frame, making the beetle stand out and allowing viewers to get a sense of just how small it is in its world." —*Angela Ledyard*

RUNNER-UP
HANNAH
Age 10



▶"Woven Together"

"From the angle of the spiderweb chosen by the photographer to the shimmering, fluorescent rainbow that vibrates throughout the entire photo, this image is truly magical. I feel as if I could be looking at a galaxy and outer space and not a spiderweb in the forest." —*Jesse Burke*

Nature Photo Contest AGES 8–10

FINALIST
AAYUSH
Age 10

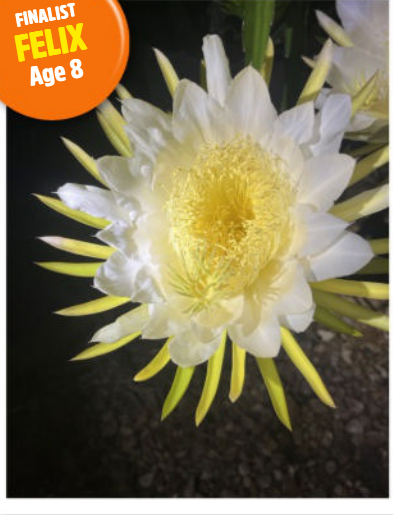
FINALIST
CHARLOTTE
Age 9

FINALIST
JAXON
Age 10

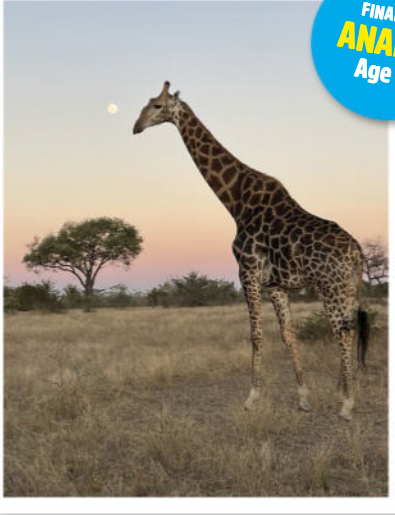
FINALIST
EMILIA
Age 10

FINALIST
LEO
Age 9

FINALIST
FELIX
Age 8



FINALIST
ANAIYA
Age 9

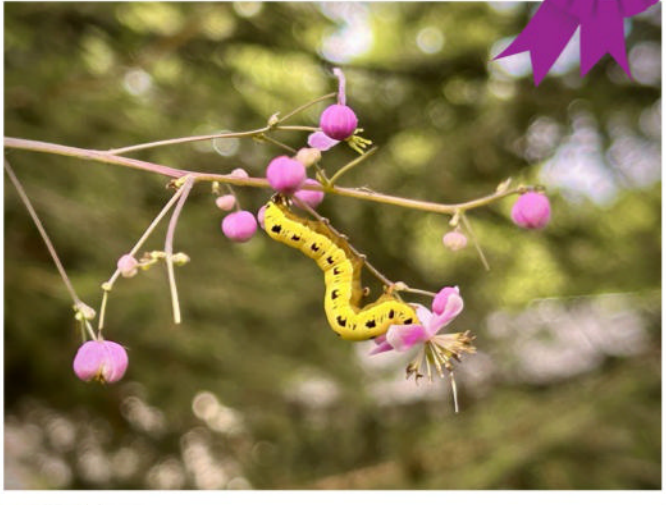


Nature Photo Contest AGES 11-14

GRAND PRIZE WINNER
FINN
Age 11

"Door Dash"
"Finn's photograph captures a tender moment in the life of an adult swallow and its young. The blur of motion in the parent's wings shows how quickly it moves during this 'dash' to feed the baby. The angle of view makes it feel like we're right there outside the nest, watching it happen. This wonderful shot tells a real-life nature story."
—Angela Ledyard

RUNNER-UP
MYRA
Age 12



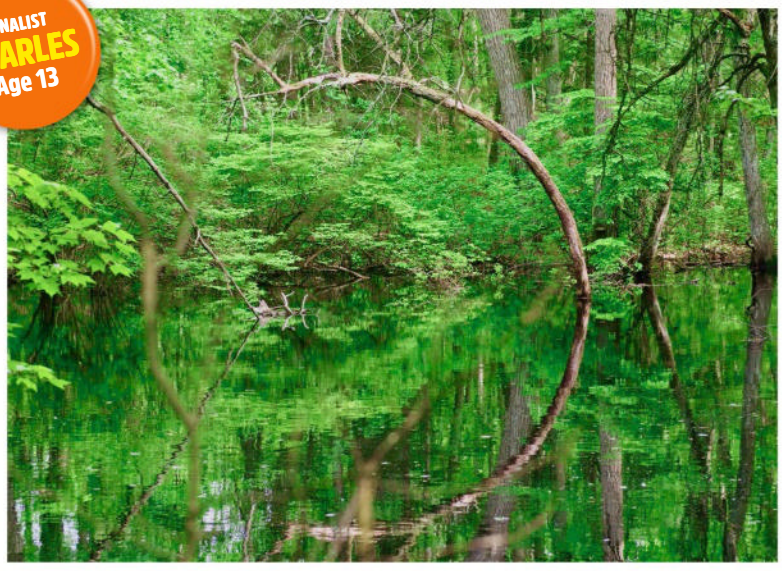
"Escapades of a Caterpillar"
"The use of color in this image is striking. The depth of field allows the subject to really stand out from the background, creating a beautiful blurry palette behind it. The great experience of finding a special creature like the caterpillar is captured perfectly." *—Jesse Burke*

RUNNER-UP
MADISON
Age 11

"The Catch of the Day"
"This image shows the power and grace of an osprey in motion. The detail in the feathers and the sharpness of the eye capture the beauty and precision of this remarkable hunter. The ocean below adds texture and movement to the scene, making it feel alive and dynamic. Photographing an osprey in flight is no small challenge, requiring steady tracking and a keen understanding of timing." *—Ami Vitale*

Nature Photo Contest AGES 11-14

FINALIST
CHARLES
Age 13

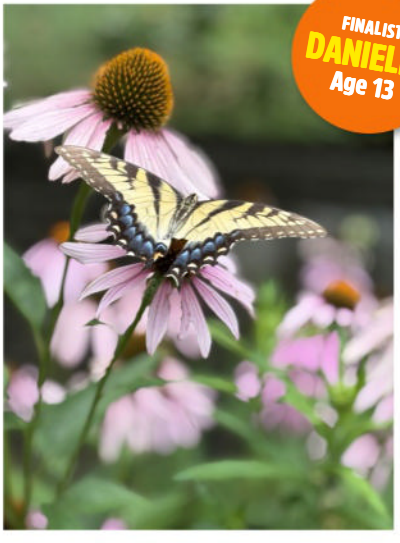


FINALIST
MELODY
Age 14

FINALIST
ALEXANDER
Age 14

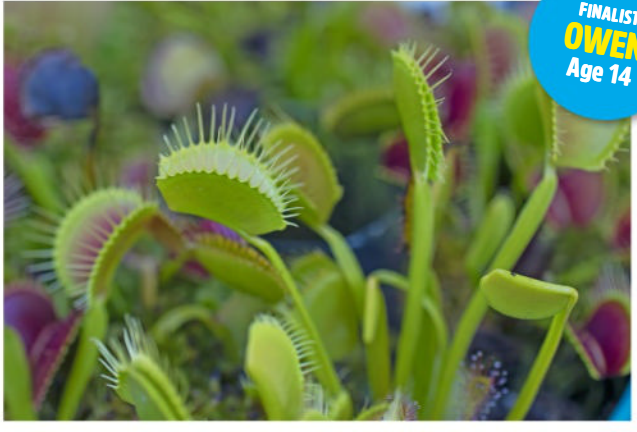
FINALIST
HOGAN
Age 12

FINALIST
DANIELLE
Age 13



FINALIST
TEDDY
Age 12

FINALIST
OWEN
Age 14



DINO HISTORY
The first feathered dinosaur ever found was Archaeopteryx, which lived about 150 million years ago.

An artist's rendering of a Mirasaura grauvogeli

A prehistoric reptile with feathers

Scientists in Germany have discovered a fossilized reptile with an unusual feature: a row of plumes, or feather-like features, rising from its back. The 247-million-year-old creature could change what paleontologists (scientists who study the past through fossils) believe about the origin of feathers.

When the fossil was first discovered in 1939 in France, it was mostly enclosed in rock and had what appeared to be a fish fin on its back. The specimen was donated to Germany's Stuttgart State Museum of Natural History in 2019. A team of scientists there began to study it and noted that the "fin" was connected to a reptile bone at one end.

The Mirasaura fossil

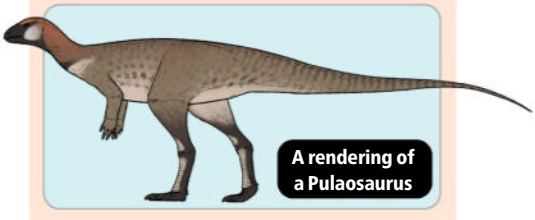
By gradually chipping away the rock, the team uncovered the remains of a previously unknown type of reptile with a row of plumes. They named the animal Mirasaura grauvogeli. Mirasaura means "wonderful reptile" in Latin.

The biggest question surrounding Mirasaura was how it developed its unusual and distinctive feature. That answer may lie in its DNA (complex chemical that carries instructions for how a living thing should grow and develop), which gives birds the ability to grow feathers out of their skin. The discovery of Mirasaura suggests that the same ability may have evolved (developed very slowly over time) in early reptiles more than 300 million years ago. That could mean that other ancient reptiles that have not yet been discovered also had feather-type adornments.

"I hope this will broaden our perspective," Stephan Spiekman, a paleontologist at the Stuttgart Museum and an author of the study, told *The New York Times*. "And then who knows what we'll find?" Spiekman said Mirasaura reminded him of Longisquama insignis, one of the most puzzling reptile fossils ever discovered. The 220-million-year-old creature lived 30 million years after Mirasaura and had long, flat projections sticking out of its back. For years, scientists have debated whether they were long scales or feathers.

The researchers who found Mirasaura believe that both creatures belonged to an extinct family of reptiles that lived in trees. Other scientists aren't convinced that Mirasaura's crest was similar to feathers, but future research will shed more light on the question.

A chirping dinosaur?


A rendering of a Pulaosaurus

A fossil found in China suggests that some dinosaurs tweeted rather than roared. Paleontologists from the Chinese Academy of Sciences revealed the discovery of a fossilized plant-eating dinosaur found in 163-million-year-old rocks. The mostly complete skeleton of the 2-foot-long creature, named Pulaosaurus, offered a revealing look at the beaked animal.

Pulaosaurus is part of a group of dinosaurs that included "duck-billed" hadrosaurs and horned dinosaurs. Researchers noted that it had a bony larynx (part of the throat containing vocal chords) that may have been large enough to produce birdlike noises. The team hopes to find more of the same types of fossils with intact voice boxes to gain a deeper understanding of what dinosaurs sounded like.

Citizen science has impact on research

Ordinary people are making big contributions to scientific research through the online platform iNaturalist, a new study found. Launched in 2008, iNaturalist enables citizen scientists to upload photos and sound recordings of plants, animals, and other living things, often right from their phones. By 2024, 3.3 million users had submitted more than 200 million entries with data like date, time, and location.

SMART START
The iNaturalist platform was created by graduate students at the University of California, Berkeley.

Verified contributions are shared on a free public database, and scientists around the world often use the information in their published research. The new study found that observations from iNaturalist have been used in more than 5,000 papers from 128 countries, covering 638 groups of species. That number is also rising. In 2022, there were 10 times more papers with data from iNaturalist than in 2017.

Observations from iNaturalist have helped scientists in many ways. For example, one paper used data from the platform to determine that the range of the jaguarundi, a wild cat in Latin America, had changed. Others have addressed the spread of invasive plants in the eastern US, the diets of birds in the Andes, and the effects of Australian wildfires on local wildlife.

"Millions of people are now directly shaping how we understand and conserve biodiversity," said Corey Callaghan, an author of the study. "Keep doing what you're doing," he advised iNaturalist contributors.

An image shared on iNaturalist

Tomatoes and potatoes

Did potatoes come from tomatoes?

For years, scientists have wondered where potatoes come from. New research suggests that they were created 8 million to 9 million years ago when wild tomato plants randomly mated with a type of flowering plant called Etuberosum.

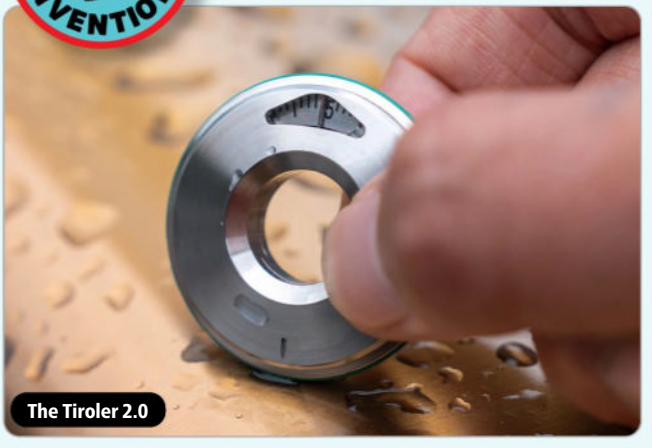
Modern potato plants have something called a tuber, which is the part of the plant that grows underground and what we eat. But neither tomatoes nor Etuberosum have tubers. It's only when they are combined that tubers are formed.

A team of scientists confirmed this by altering the genes (short sections of DNA) of potato plants. When they removed tomato genes or Etuberosum genes from potato plants, the plants struggled to form tubers. This led the team to conclude that genes from both plants were needed in order to create tubers.

The discovery could one day help scientists alter genes to produce potatoes that are more resistant to challenges like disease, pests, and climate change.

AMAZING INVENTION

A ring to measure curved surfaces


The Tiroler 2.0

A new tool makes it easy to measure curved, irregular, or oddly shaped surfaces. Made of titanium and shaped like a ring, the Tiroler 2.0 is small and lightweight and works in places where stiff metal or floppy fabric tape measures don't.

To measure, users roll the outer wheel of the Tiroler 2.0 across a surface. As they do, the inner wheel rotates and makes a clicking sound for each inch or centimeter, and the measurement is displayed in a small window. The device is set to be available this month.

BRITTANY MASON/GETTY IMAGES; TITANER; ON LEFT PAGE: GABRIEL UGUETO; STEPHAN SPIEKMAN; CONNOR ASHBRIDGE

Carlos Alcaraz

Aryna Sabalenka

BOLD AND BRIGHT
There have been debates about whether tennis balls are yellow or green, but their official shade is known as optic yellow.

Helpful lighting

Bright lights at night can cause light pollution, which confuses animals and makes it hard for people to see stars. Courts at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center (above), where the US Open is held, have shielded LED lights that keep rays from shining up at the sky.

Exciting finals at the US Open

From August 24 to September 7, the US Open tennis tournament took place in Queens, New York. It is one of the world's four most prestigious tennis competitions, known as Grand Slams.

For the second year in a row, Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus was the women's singles champion. She is the first woman to win back-to-back US Open titles since 2014. In men's singles, Spain's Carlos Alcaraz was the champion.

Several US players had strong performances at the Open. In singles, Amanda Anisimova made the women's final, Jessica Pegula reached the semifinals, and Coco Gauff reached the quarterfinals. In men's singles, Taylor Fritz made it to the quarterfinals.

Amanda Anisimova

The women's singles final was played on September 6. Sabalenka, the world's number one player, was hoping to win her first Grand Slam of the season. Meanwhile, Anisimova, who was seeded (ranked) eighth at the Open, wanted a big victory after losing in the final at Wimbledon, another Grand Slam, in July.

In the best-of-three-sets final, Sabalenka comfortably won her first set, 6–3, but had a difficult test in the second set, which went to a tiebreak. She took control of it early and racked up a five-point lead before winning, 7–6, to earn the fourth major title of her career.

On the men's side, for the third straight Grand Slam this year, the final featured Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner of Italy, who entered as the number one player in the world. Alcaraz defeated 24-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic In the semifinals, and reached the finals without having lost a set at the tournament. Sinner, the defending champion, lost only two sets at the tournament before meeting Alcaraz on September 7.

In their best-of-five-sets match, Alcaraz easily won the first set, 6–2. Sinner bounced back to win the second, 6–3, but was unable to keep up his momentum. Alcaraz dominated Sinner in the third set and won it, 6–1, then took the fourth set, 6–4, to secure his second Grand Slam title of 2025.

Alcaraz, at age 22, has already won six Grand Slam championships during his career. After the win in New York, he rose to number one in the men's rankings.

THIS WEEK'S WINNERS...

BASKETBALL

In WNBA action on September 4, the Golden State Valkyries beat the Dallas Wings, 84–80, to become the first WNBA expansion team to make the playoffs in their first season. Janelle Salaün scored 19 points for the Valkyries. On September 7, the Las Vegas Aces beat the Chicago Sky, 80–66, for their 14th straight victory. Aces star A'ja Wilson had 31 points and 11 rebounds in the game.

A'ja Wilson (right)

SOCCER

In a matchup of cross-country NWSL rivals on September 7, NJ/NY Gotham FC beat Angel City, 3–1. Angel City had a 1–0 lead for the first half, but Gotham's Gabi Portilho, Rose Lavelle, and Jaelin Howell each scored in the second half.

NASCAR

Denny Hamlin won his fifth race of the NASCAR season, the Enjoy Illinois 300, on September 7. He leads NASCAR in Cup Series wins this season and will be one of the 12 drivers in the playoffs.

LONG LEGACY
The Arizona Cardinals, which were founded as the Morgan Athletic Club in 1898, are the oldest team in the NFL.

The Cowboys and the Eagles in the first game of the NFL season

NFL regular season begins

On September 4, the NFL (National Football League) kicked off its 2025–26 season. Some of the top teams are expected to include the Philadelphia Eagles, who are the defending Super Bowl champions, the Baltimore Ravens, the Buffalo Bills, and the Kansas City Chiefs.

This season, several NFL game rules have been changed, including ones that will affect kickoffs, the use of replay officials, and how measurements are made. Regular-season overtime rules will now match the postseason, giving both teams—not just one—a chance to possess the ball and score.

In the opening game, the Eagles defeated the Dallas Cowboys, 24–20. Eagles quarterback (QB) Jalen Hurts led the way for his team on offense, throwing for 152 yards while adding 62 rushing yards and two rushing touchdowns.

The following night, the NFL held its second-ever game in South America. It featured the Kansas City Chiefs and the Los Angeles Chargers playing in São Paulo, Brazil. The Chiefs, who lost to the Eagles in the Super Bowl last season, were defeated by the Chargers, 27–21.

Most of the league's other teams had their season openers on September 7. Of the 13 games played that day, nine were decided by one score. One thrilling game featured new Pittsburgh Steelers QB Aaron Rodgers defeating his former team, the New York Jets, 34–32. Steelers kicker Chris Boswell made a 60-yard field goal with just over a minute left to secure the win. In another exciting game, the Bills scored 16 points in the last eight minutes of the fourth quarter to beat the Ravens, 41–40.

COACH OF THE WEEK

Coach's Name: **Diana Velasquez**

Sport: **Soccer**

"My coach is always supportive. She even trains me in my backyard. She is the best coach you could ever imagine because she is kind and doesn't care if you lose—she just wants you to try your best. Her heart is the best part about her, and it's as big as the world. She gives good pep talks when I'm feeling nervous, and she gives out good energy. She means a lot to me, and I'd like everyone to know that." Harper, 8, New York

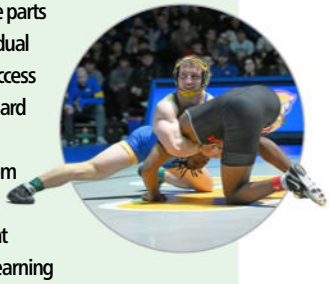
To nominate a Coach of the Week, send your coach's name, photo, sport, and team to *hello@theweekjunior.com.* Include your name, age, state, and a few reasons why your coach is great.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Luca Augustine

AGE: 22 SPORT: WRESTLING
TEAM: UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

Getting started When I was young, I tried a lot of sports to see which ones I liked. I didn't have good hand-eye coordination, so I was never very good at sports like football, baseball, or basketball. I found I was most passionate about wrestling. In combat sports, you use aggression, but you have to balance it with patience and control. That's one of my favorite parts of it. I also like the individual aspect and how your success is solely based on how hard you work. As with every sport, there's always room to improve—you're never 100% perfect. That constant need to keep learning and improving is what drives me.



Power meal My go-to sandwich before a meet is a PB&J with banana and honey on it.

Proud moments I won the US Under-20 freestyle national championship in 2022 and got to compete for Team USA at the Pan-American championships. I won that tournament and received the Outstanding Wrestler award.

Big dreams This is my last year competing. I was very close to getting on the podium last season at nationals. Being up there as one of the top eight wrestlers in the country is a huge goal of mine. Academically, my goal is to go to medical school. I'm applying right now.

Wise words Thinking about how much you love your sport helps take the pressure off when you compete. Winning shouldn't be the most important part. It should be the fact that you want to compete and have fun.

GETTY IMAGES; PITT ATHLETICS (2); ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (4)

The plane Glamorous Glennis on display

BUSY BUILDING
In 2024, 1.9 million people visited the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC.

Changes at the Air and Space Museum

The popular Washington, DC, institution recently reopened five updated galleries filled with important artifacts.

The Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC, is home to some of the most important flying machines in history. Its collection includes the first successful airplane powered with a pilot and the command module that took US astronauts to the Moon and back in 1969. The museum has been undergoing renovations since 2018, and five newly updated galleries have recently been unveiled. They celebrate the past, present, and future of aviation and space exploration.

At the time the renovation was first announced, Christopher Browne, who is now the director of the museum, said he remembered walking into the building shortly after it opened in 1977 and being in awe. His goal with the renovation is "to continue that with new generations of visitors, who may be defining 'wow' in a different type of way," he said.

Amelia Earhart

One reopened gallery is the Boeing Milestones of Flight Hall. Among its highlights are a piece of the Moon that visitors can touch and the rocket plane Glamorous Glennis that legendary pilot Chuck Yeager flew in 1947 when he became the first person to break the sound barrier. Another gallery, Barron Hilton Pioneers of Flight, celebrates aviation breakthroughs from the 1920s and 1930s. It includes a plane flown by pioneering pilot Amelia Earhart.

The new Futures in Space gallery, meanwhile, focuses on cutting-edge technology in spaceflight. It includes interactive displays where visitors can learn about topics such as rocket propulsion and rocket steering. There is also a 3D-printed Mars habitat to help people imagine life on Mars. As Browne said in a recent interview, "It's important to look forward and ask questions. Who goes to space? And what do you do when you get there?"

The last group of renovated galleries will open in July. The timing coincides with America's 250th birthday and the museum's 50th anniversary.

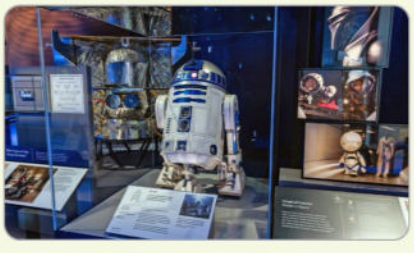
3 things to see

Famous capsule

To help highlight innovations in commercial spaceflight, visitors can step into a mock-up of Blue Origin's New Shepard crew capsule (above). So far, the original spacecraft has carried a total of 70 passengers on short flights to space.

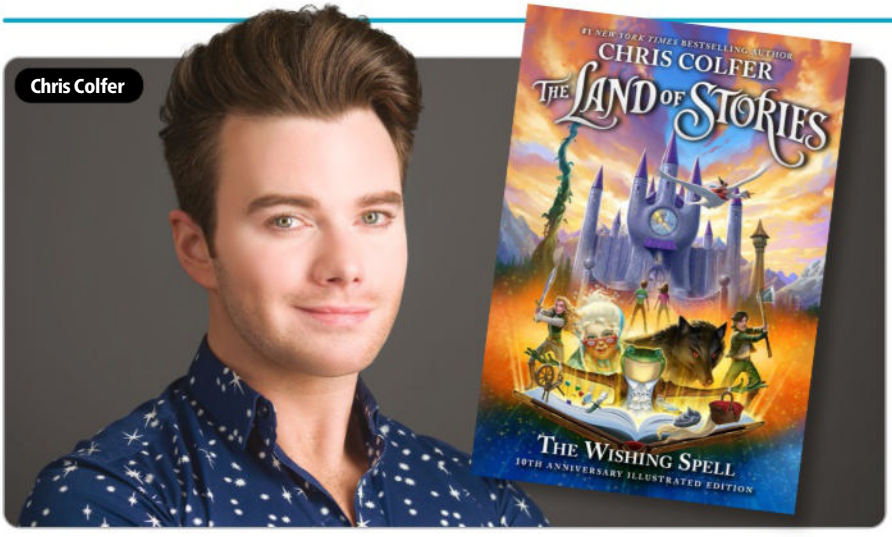
Immersive experience

The museum's updated IMAX theater has a six-story screen. It offers a larger-than-life viewing of popular films such as *Dune* and *Apollo 13*, as well as the documentaries *Deep Sky* and *The Blue Angels* (below).



Pop culture picks

The museum has a growing collection of space-related items from the entertainment world. They include a model of the starship Enterprise from *Star Trek* and a replica of R2-D2 from *Star Wars* (above).



Land of Stories to become a film

Warner Bros. Pictures, the movie studio that produced the *Harry Potter* films, is developing a movie adaptation of another best-selling book series, *The Land of Stories,* by Chris Colfer. The series follows a set of twins who end up in a world filled with characters from fairy tales. The live-action film is being written by Phil Johnston, who wrote the animated films *Zootopia*, *Wreck-It Ralph*, and *Ralph Breaks the Internet*.

The first *Land of Stories* book, *The Wishing Spell*, was published in 2012, and now there are six books in the core series. In an interview with *The Week Junior* to celebrate the series' 10th anniversary, Colfer said he hopes the books "inspire kids to be creative and compassionate." Other Colfer books include the series *A Tale of Magic*, which is another fantasy adventure, and the *Roswell Johnson* sci-fi series, which has a second book coming out on September 16.

Colfer has dyslexia, a learning disability that makes it more challenging to read and spell. He had a hard time focusing while reading when he was young, and he said fantasy series like *Harry Potter* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* grabbed his attention and made reading easier.

In 2017, Colfer made a deal with a studio to write and direct a film adaptation of *The Wishing Spell* himself, but the movie never came to life. Now he will be a producer on the new film. He wrote in a recent Instagram post about the project, "Wish us luck, kids! I think the world could use a little magic right now." A release date for the film has not been announced.

DID YOU KNOW?
Chris Colfer was a star of the hit TV musical comedy-drama Glee, a series about kids in a high school singing club.

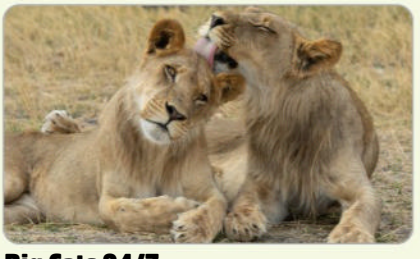
READER RECOMMENDS

Star Trek Prodigy *TV-PG (Netflix or buy on other platforms)*
"This is my favorite animated show. It is about a young alien named Dal R'El who is stuck on an asteroid named Tars Lamora. After finding an old Starfleet ship buried under a pile of rocks, Dal and his friends blast off into space in search of a better future. During their journeys, they end up making new friends and unwanted enemies. My favorite episode is when Dal discovers the holodeck (a type of virtual reality simulator) and goes on an unexpected adventure. I highly recommend this show to anyone who likes action and sci-fi." Jonah, 11, Colorado

Do you have a film or TV show to recommend to other kids? Send your review to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

THIS WEEK'S WATCH LIST

Wizards Beyond Waverly Place
(Disney Channel)
There's a new season of this series about a wizard dad, Justin, who mentors a young wizard-in-training, Billie. Now that Justin's two sons have gained their own magical powers, Justin must train all three kids for the high-stakes Family Wizard Competition.



Big Cats 24/7
(PBS)
Botswana's Okavango Delta is the setting for this documentary series, which is back with new episodes. Besides providing an up-close look at lions, leopards, and cheetahs, the show reveals how the filmmakers use high-tech gear and face challenges as they capture footage.

Lego Star Wars: Rebuild the Galaxy—Pieces of the Past
(Disney+)
After dealing with hero and villain role reversals in *Lego Star Wars: Rebuild the Galaxy*, nerf-herder Sig and his friends now face a powerful new enemy in this sequel. Look out for Darth Jar Jar, K-2SO, and other popular characters.

ANDREW SCOTT; COURTESY OF PUBLISHER; NETFLIX; DISNEY; MAARTEN DE BOER; MITCH BUCKLEY/BBC STUDIOS; COURTESY OF DISNEY+; ON LEFT PAGE: SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM/MARK AVINO (5)

DID YOU KNOW?
Golf balls are typically covered in about 300 to 500 dimples, but the record is 1,070.

Everybody's Golf Hot Shots

Tee off in a goofy golf game

Everybody's Golf Hot Shots is a new sports game. It was recently released for the Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 5, and PC.

The Everybody's Golf series, which used to be titled Hot Shots Golf in North America, was first introduced in 1997. Golf can be a serious sport, but the game is known for combining silly characters and cartoonish animations with realistic golfing action. The new game is the eighth main title in the series. It is also the biggest and most action-packed, with more characters, courses, and power-ups than ever before. There are more than 25 playable characters, including talented teens and old pros, and you can customize their personal styles as well as their golf games. There are also several classic video characters in the mix, such as Pac-Man.

Players can unlock special shots and skills by building up points. Every character has their own special shots, but the game also includes trick shots everybody can learn. Super Shots include rocket-powered balls that seek out the hole like a missile, and they are particularly helpful when you're playing in obstacle-filled Wacky Golf mode.

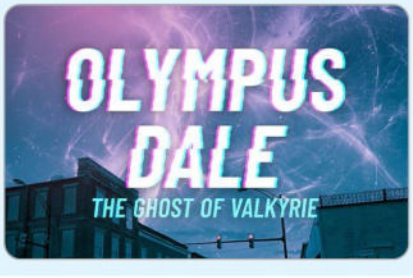
Golfers looking for a semi-realistic game can try out practice and world tour modes, which play out on 10 courses around the world. Wacky Golf, meanwhile, is filled with surprises that can help or hurt your performance, colorful targets that make sinking shots more exciting, or a game in which you lose clubs depending on your score. You can play solo, with up to four people in a competition, or tee off with others online.

PODCAST OF THE WEEK

OLYMPUS DALE: THE GHOST OF VALKYRIE

Major podcast platforms

This new sci-fi story is part of the Kaboom series. It is set in a small town that becomes surrounded by a supernatural barrier and isolated from the outside world. Follow along as a group of teens race to save the area and uncover hidden secrets.



GAME OF THE WEEK

TAMAGOTCHI PLAZA

Nintendo Switch, Switch 2

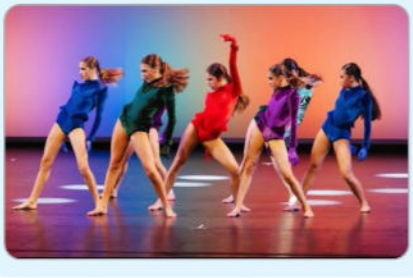
Tamagotchi originated as virtual pets that were part of a craze in the 1990s. Over the years, the characters have starred in cartoons and video games. This new one is part of a cozy simulation series. Your goal is to run different shops, serve the characters, and attract visitors to Tamahiko Town.

VIDEO OF THE WEEK

POP MUZIK—PROJECT 21

tinyurl.com/TWJUS-Project21

Project 21 is an elite youth dance training program founded by renowned choreographer Molly Long. The group is known for high-level choreography and winning national titles. In this video, which went viral on social media, dancers perform a routine set to the synth-pop hit "Pop Muzik."



BANDAI NAMCO (3); BYU BROADCASTING; ISLA VIA YOUTUBE

BOOK OF THE WEEK

Dream

By Barbara O'Connor

(Farrar Straus Giroux Books for Young Readers)

Idalee comes home from the laundromat to big news: Her mom, a singer, is going on tour with her country music band for a couple of months. While Idalee is her mom's top fan, Idalee also longs to make her own mark as a songwriter. When Idalee hears about a songwriting contest for kids, she is excited to enter. The winning tune will be put to music and performed by a country singer. Idalee also secretly hopes that if she takes home first prize in the contest, her mom might finally perform a song she's written. But Idalee's hand-me-down guitar is falling apart and out of tune. While shopping with her mom, she spots a beautiful blue guitar that she thinks will help improve the songs she's written and inspire her to create new music. But Idalee's mom can't afford the instrument. Then Idalee remembers that her uncle said her grandfather had hidden a treasure in her house before he passed away. Can Idalee and her friends find it? And will getting a new guitar really be what it takes to win the contest? This heartfelt story is the companion novel to *Wish*, but you can easily follow the plot on its own.

ASK THE AUTHOR

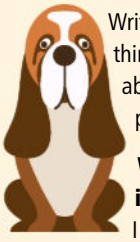
Barbara O'Connor

We spoke to the author of the Book of the Week.

Do you enjoy country music?
Yes, I love country music—it inspires me. I'm a big Dolly Parton fan.

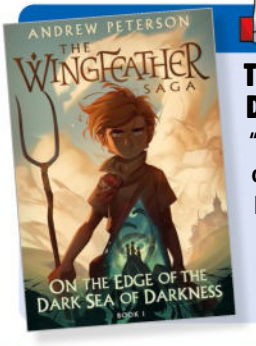
Have you ever written a song?
I hadn't—until I wrote the ones for this book!

When you were a child, what did you want to be?
A teacher. I would've said writer, but when I was growing up, I didn't know that I could make a living being a writer.



Any advice for aspiring authors?
Write what you love. I do think it's easier to write about something you are passionate about.

What do you enjoy in your spare time?
I take a tap-dancing class for adults. I also like to play Wordle, garden, and go on lots of walks.



READER RECOMMENDS

The Wingfeather Saga: On the Edge of the Dark Sea of Darkness *By Andrew Peterson*

"This book is about Janner, a young boy who is growing up in Aerwiar during a time of crisis. The Fangs of Dang, an army of lizard monsters, has conquered Aerwiar. Janner is pushed through struggles, and there is a big surprise at the end. This book has made everyone I know who has read it tear up. It's really good." Graham, 12, Arkansas

Do you have a book to recommend? Send your review to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

4 new books fans of football will enjoy

These fiction and nonfiction titles are filled with action and fun facts.

Big Book of WHO Football
By the editors of Sports Illustrated Kids
(Sports Illustrated Kids)
This newly updated book highlights the accomplishments of the best football players of all time. There are fun facts, stats, and photos about current stars, such as Patrick Mahomes, and legends like Joe Montana. *Ages 8–12*

Dinged
By Tommy Greenwald
(Amulet Books)
Caleb is following in his dad's footsteps as the quarterback for his high school football team. But soon he's confronted with the reality that his dad sustained brain damage from playing football. Caleb must decide whether to keep playing. Now in paperback, this book is part of the popular Game Changer series. *Ages 10–14*

Rocket Arm
By Tim Green
(HarperCollins)
Zeno, an 11-year-old quarterback, has a rocket arm—the ability to throw the football very long distances. He gets recruited to play at an elite boarding school and soon finds himself trying to solve a mystery. Will he be too distracted to play in the big game? This story is action-packed. *Ages 8–12*

Sports Illustrated Kids All-Pro Football Almanac
By Patrick Donnelly
(Capstone Press)
This almanac focuses on exciting moments in football history. It covers the greatest games, iconic players, and team dynasties. Fun charts list statistics about the game, such as the team with the greatest winning percentage of all time: the Dallas Cowboys. *Ages 8 and up*

BOOKS: COURTESY OF PUBLISHERS; AUTHOR: COURTESY OF BARBARA O'CONNOR; GETTY IMAGES

DID YOU KNOW?
Studies show that friendships can boost happiness, reduce stress, and strengthen your sense of purpose and belonging.

Strike up friendships

Try these tips to form close connections with other kids.

A new school year is an opportunity for a fresh start, including making new friends. But lots of kids feel that growing their social circle can be intimidating. How do you start talking to someone? The truth is that most people are wondering the same thing—and hoping someone else will take the first step. Here's how.

Join a club

When you share an interest with others, whether it's chorus or robotics, you naturally have a lot to talk about. That's why joining a club after school can be a natural way to make friends. If you feel hesitant about attending on your own, say hi to the teacher or a student in charge and let them know you would like to check out a meeting. They will help put you at ease about coming!

A friend makes everything brighter!

Buddy up in class

Pay attention to classmates who are interested in the same subjects you enjoy. That makes it easier to ask "Want to be my partner?" when a class project comes along. Working together in class can lead to after-school study sessions and discovering other things you may have in common.

Practice topics to talk about

Starting a conversation can feel awkward, so role-play first with a sibling or parent. Try out openers like: "Did you do anything fun over the summer?" or "Hi, I'm [name]. What teacher do you have?" Practicing helps you feel more comfortable when the real moment comes. That could be before the morning bell, at lunch, or on the walk or bus home from school. Celebrate small successes, like saying hello to someone, as you build confidence.

Give back

Volunteer opportunities are typically welcoming settings. Sign up to work side by side with other kids, whether to plant a garden or organize a bake sale to support animal rescue. You'll meet kids who care about the same causes you do, which can be a solid base for friendship.

Make plans

Friendships deepen through consistent interaction, so invest time in them. You could suggest a pickup game of basketball or going out for ice cream, then invite old and new friends to get to know one another. Soon enough, you and your new friend will look at each other like, "Do you even remember when we weren't friends?"

Heartfelt gestures

These small meaningful moves can show a friend—new or old—that you appreciate them.

Say thank you Friends support one another in all kinds of ways. Show your gratitude by saying, "Thank you for being a good friend. It means a lot to me!"

Bake a treat A special snack—like cookies, brownies, or mini muffins—can brighten a friend's day. They're also fun to share with a group of pals.

Write a card A handmade card shows extra thoughtfulness toward your friend. You don't need a special occasion to write a message like, "You're awesome. I'm really glad we met!"

HISTORIC HUES
In 1903, Crayola sold its first box of crayons—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet, brown, and black—for 5 cents.

WARNING!
Ask an adult's permission before using the oven.

Turn old crayons into new art supplies

What you'll need

- Old or broken crayons
- Bowl of warm water
- Silicone candy molds in any small to medium shape
- Baking sheet
- Parchment paper or aluminum foil

Instructions

1. If your crayons still have wrappers, peel them off. An easy way to do this is to soak them in a bowl of warm water for 15 to 30 minutes. After soaking them, the wrappers should slide off easily.
2. Place the silicone mold on a baking sheet. (Line the baking sheet first with parchment or foil to catch any spills.)
3. Break long crayons into smaller pieces. Then sort them however you'd like: by rainbow order (like the crayon at bottom right above), color families (like pinks and reds or blues and greens together), or totally mixed up.
4. Fill the molds with broken crayons. Overfill the molds, as the wax will settle as it melts. You can leave some empty if you don't have enough crayons to fill the whole mold.
5. Heat oven to 250° F. Place the baking sheet with the molds in the oven.
6. Check on the crayons after 10 minutes. If the wax is too low in the mold, you can add a few more small pieces and heat for 2 to 5 more minutes, until everything is melted.
7. Let the crayons cool completely—up to an hour—and gently pop them out of the molds. While you allow them to cool, clean the molds: Pop the shapes inside out and use warm, soapy water and a soft brush (like an old toothbrush) to gently scrub out the wax residue. After your crayon sticks cool, use them to make new art!

ECO TIP OF THE WEEK: PICKLE LEFTOVER VEGETABLES

If you have vegetables in your garden or fridge that you're not sure you will get to eat before they spoil, consider pickling them. Pickling produce like cucumbers, cabbage, peppers, carrots, or celery makes them taste delicious and preserves them so you have more time to eat them. This keeps spoiled vegetables from going into landfills. Ask an adult to help you boil half a cup of white vinegar, half a cup of water, and a teaspoon of salt in a medium saucepot. Slice big vegetables into pieces and fill a jar halfway with them. Pour the vinegar mixture into the jar and allow to cool, then seal with a lid and refrigerate for 48 hours before serving. Pickles will last about three weeks in the fridge.

Don't let veggies go to waste.

JODI LEVINE FOR SUPERMAKEIT; GETTY IMAGES; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES

Keyword crossword

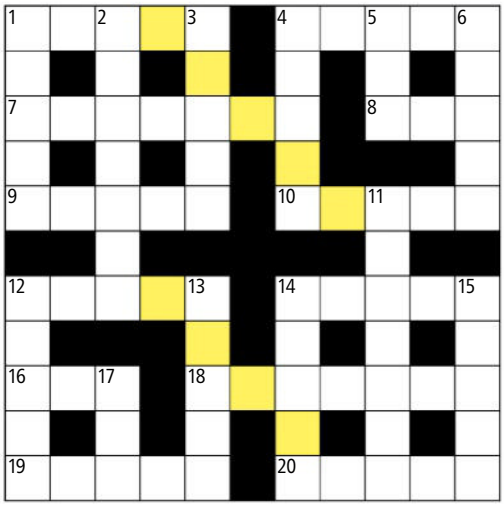
Once you have completed the crossword, transfer the letters in the yellow boxes, first in the top diagonal and then in the bottom diagonal, into the boxes below to get the answer to the Keyword question.

ACROSS

1 On the lookout, like a good watchdog
4 Hair hanging in front of the forehead, like Taylor Swift's
7 Variety of pudding dessert
8 Hot drink commonly served in special cups
9 Fabric
10 Word that can follow corn or maple
12 Strict, like Harry Potter's Professor McGonagall
14 Foot control on a bicycle or barber chair
16 Person who calls "Safe!" or "Out!"
18 The world's favorite smell, according to a 2022 study
19 Beach item to put your stuff on
20 Walk down the ___ (get married)

DOWN

1 Name of an ancient, advanced Mexican civilization
2 Look around carefully
3 Item you might place under your pillow
4 Bird "mouths"
5 Small piece of hardware often sold with a bolt
6 Area of marshy wetland
11 Questions like the ones in a joke book
12 Crouch low so your thighs rest on your heels
13 *Charlotte's Web* or *Black Beauty*, for example
14 Black-and-white bamboo-eating mammal
15 Walk out of a room or building
17 Row in a house of worship



Keyword question: What ice cream flavor's name was popularized during the Great Depression as a reference to the difficult path America was on at the time?

THREE FOR ALL

Sort this list into three familiar three-part phrases, like THREE-RING CIRCUS or SALT LAKE CITY.

OFF HANDS STAY KNOCK ON UP IT EXPERIENCE LATE

CODE CRACKER

ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 29.

In this coded list of things in the comic strip *Peanuts*, every letter has been replaced with a substitute. The same substitutions are used throughout the list. Hint: Every X here is an uncoded K. Use the letter patterns you find to crack the code. (NEED ANOTHER HINT? Check the bottom of the page.)

H S Z A R L V ' M C E Y P T

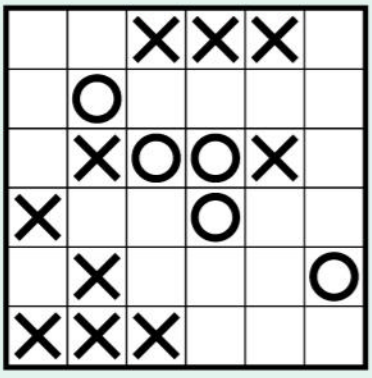
H Y C H X S P H B Z A R

X S Z L - L B Z S P U Z V L L

T E U R E Y M L

Hit or miss

Place an X or O in each empty square so there are never more than three X's or O's together in a row, column, or diagonal. Hint: If you find three in a row of one letter, you can put the other letter into the spaces at either end.



Spot the difference

These two pictures of a boy photographing poppies appear to be the same, but take a closer look. There are actually five differences. Can you see them?

PUZZLES BY PUZZABILITY

Code cracker hint: Every H here is an uncoded P.

That's unbelievable!

They're unbe-leaf-ably strong.

Lily pads show their strength

More than 40 gardens from nine countries entered this year's Waterlily Weigh-Off. The Denver Botanic Gardens hosts the annual contest, with a prize going to the Victoria waterlily that holds the most weight without sinking. These plate-shaped plants can grow up to 10 feet wide. A system of air-filled veins allows them to float while supporting objects placed on their tops, ranging from bricks to cheesecakes. Bok Tower Gardens in Florida took the trophy with a lily pad that held 183 pounds of weight.

Sand and deliver!

Job for a pizza delivery "dog"

Domino's in the UK has created "Domidog," a robot dog that delivers pizzas on beaches. The robot's sensors and cameras "see" everything around it, so it can pick its way over sandy or pebbly shores and through crowds of people. After a delivery, the robot stays to protect the food from greedy seagulls. The pizza chain came up with the idea after a survey showed that one third of British beachgoers have had their food stolen by gulls. A spokesperson called Domidog a "tech-driven answer to an age-old beach problem."

Xiaogui's talent "blue" away the competition.

Bird earns a colorful record

Years of training have paid off for Xiaogui the parrot, who has claimed a world record by identifying 10 colors in 33.5 seconds. Xiaogui proved his expertise by placing tiny balls in bins that matched their colors. After initially mixing up two similar shades of pink, Xiaogui quickly corrected his mistake and dropped all 10 balls in the correct bins in the fastest time ever for a parrot. Guinness World Records said this passionate parrot is "very handy to have around if you ever need some color-coordinating done."

Did he become teenager-in-chief?

Teen starts a new country

At age 14, Daniel Jackson wanted to do something "unique"—so he and his friends founded their own country. Poring over maps, they found a forested area between Croatia and Serbia that does not officially belong to either nation. Declaring it the Free Republic of Verdis, they formed a government, with Jackson serving as president. Six years later, Verdis has a flag, currency, and passports, and about 400 people have been granted citizenship to the uninhabited "micronation." Is this story true, or does it border on falsehood?*

*Real! Other countries have refused to recognize Verdis, and Croatia banned Daniel Jackson from the area, but he insists he won't give up on the tiny nation. "The world is boring without trying something crazy," he told *The Guardian*.

DENVER BOTANIC GARDENS; DOMINO'S PIZZA; GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS; JILL MEAD/THE GUARDIAN; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES

Editor's note

Each year when we begin accepting entries to our Nature Photo Contest, we are excited to see what we receive—and we are never disappointed! This year we were inundated with more than 1,800 fantastic submissions, making the job of choosing the winners very difficult (p12). After careful consideration and debate, we are pleased to award the grand prizes to Finn and Simon, whose stunning photographs appear on our front and back covers. Congratulations to them and to our runners-up and finalists. Your work is outstanding! Thank you, as well, to every child who entered. You are to be applauded not only for the photos you took but for your love of nature, which was clearly reflected in your submissions. We are also deeply grateful for the time, expertise, and creative perspectives shared by the professional photographers who served as judges: Jesse Burke, Angela Ledyard, and Ami Vitale. Thank you all!

Andrea Barbalich
Editorial Director

CHARITY OF THE WEEK

Yellow Ribbon Fund

This organization's mission is to support US military veterans and their families. It provides housing and transportation to help severely injured veterans travel to medical facilities where they can get treatment. The group also offers programming for emotional and mental support. Since 2005, the Yellow Ribbon Fund has supported more than 30,000 people. Learn more at yellowribbonfund.org.

YELLOW RIBBON FUND

Speaking up for animals

Tessa, 14, Indiana

"A few months ago, I started my own YouTube channel with a mission to share my message about putting an end to animal exploitation. I think the biggest thing we can do to help animals is to go vegan, which means not eating any animal products. I also make videos about my guinea pigs and dog. Animals deserve to be protected, and I want to help as many animals as I can. I work hard to do what I can to help animals. Anyone can do the same, using their voice to help those in need!"

Have you done something interesting or raised money for a cause you care about? Whatever you're up to, we want to hear about it at *hello@theweekjunior.com.*

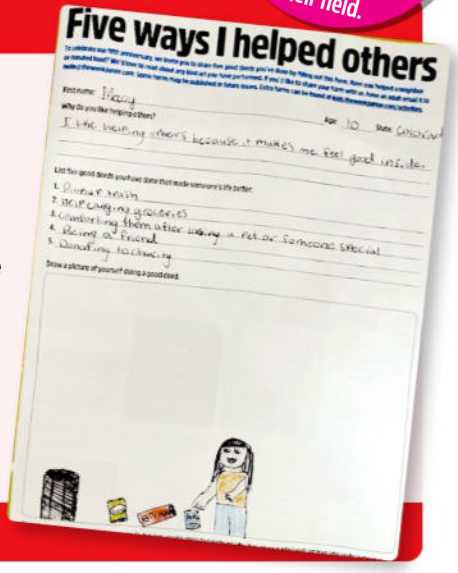
JOKE OF THE WEEK

Why did the scarecrow deserve an award?

Because they were outstanding in their field.

Your five good deeds

Mary, a 10-year old from Colorado, enjoys helping others. Her good deeds include picking up garbage, carrying groceries, and donating to charity. To celebrate *The Week Junior*'s fifth anniversary in 2025, we're asking readers to share five good deeds they've done. Have you helped a neighbor or performed a kind act? Go to kids.theweekjunior.com/activities to download a form like the one shown at right. Fill it out, then have an adult email it to us at *hello@theweekjunior.com*. We'll feature some of the submissions on this page in future issues.


Five ways I helped others

IT'S YOUR TURN Email your news, views, and photos to *hello@theweekjunior.com.*

Your turn

YOUR PHOTOS

We'd love to see pictures you've taken or pictures with you in them! Have an adult email them to us at *hello@theweekjunior.com*, along with anything you would like us to know about what's happening in the photo.

"I didn't know that the skull scientists found in Mongolia was a T. rex ancestor!" Ashrith, 9, Florida

"I made the brown butter orzo with zucchini recipe for my family, and I added chicken. It was delicious!" Addison, 11, North Carolina

"I was inspired by cyclist Florian Lipowitz to learn how to ride a bike. I was proud of myself!" Rho, 10, New York

Teacher OF THE WEEK

Teacher's Name: **Mr. Newton**

School: **St John's Lutheran School**

"Mr. Newton is an amazing teacher. He is smart, kind, and really cares for his students. Mr. Newton teaches science, which is really interesting to me. When I first saw Mr. Newton, I felt like this year was going to be great. He is a fifth grade teacher and one of the best at my school. Mr. Newton is the best!"

Margot, 9, California

Nominate your teacher for Teacher of the Week!
Send your reason for the nomination, a photo of your teacher, and your school's name and address to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

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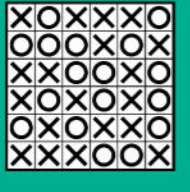
Puzzle answers (from page 26)

A	L	E	R	T		B	A	N	G	S
Z	■	X	■	O		E	■	U	■	W
T	A	P	I	O	C	A	■	T	E	A
E	■	L	■	T	■	K	■	■	■	M
C	L	O	T	H	■	S	Y	R	U	P
■	■	R	■	■	■	■	I	■	■	■
S	T	E	R	N	■	P	E	D	A	L
Q	■	■	O	■	A	■	D	■	E	■
U	M	P	■	V	A	N	I	L	L	A
A	■	E	■	E	■	D	■	E	■	V
T	O	W	E	L	■	A	I	S	L	E

Keyword answer: Rocky Road

Code cracker
pitcher's mound
pumpkin patch
kite-eating tree
doghouse

Three for all
hands-on experience
stay up late
knock it off



Quiz answers (from page 30)

1 c) Feathers **2** False. *The Wishing Spell* is the first book in the series. **3** b) Dallas Cowboys **4** Yellowstone **5** b) 1955 **6** True **7** c) Prince **8** June Cleaver **9** b) Glamorous Glennis **10** False. It makes it harder. **11** a) Guitar **12** Hot Shots Golf **13** c) 183 **14** True **15** Platypuses

We want to hear from you! To have your letters, photos, nominations, recommendations, or ideas considered for inclusion in the magazine, please include your first name, age, and state with your submission. By emailing your submission to us, you give *The Week Junior* consent to publish it in the magazine and online. Please get your parent/guardian's permission before sending anything to us.

How much of this week's news can you remember?

1 Scientists recently determined that a prehistoric reptile called Mirasaura grauvogeli had which surprising feature?
a) Beak b) Gills c) Feathers
a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

2 True or false? *A Tale of Magic* is the first book in Chris Colfer's The Land of Stories series.
True ☐ False ☐

3 Which team did the Philadelphia Eagles defeat in the opening game of the NFL season?
a) Buffalo Bills b) Dallas Cowboys
c) Pittsburgh Steelers
a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

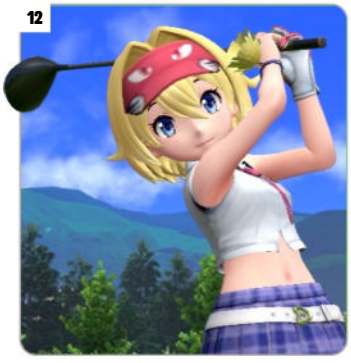
4 Recent research has found that free-roaming bison are improving the environment at which US national park?

5 When was the first *Guinness Book of World Records* published?
a) 1945 b) 1955 c) 1965
a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

6 True or false? A recent study found that potatoes are closely related to tomatoes.
True ☐ False ☐

7 Kris Kollins has been cast as the lead in an upcoming play inspired by the life of what musician?
a) Bono b) Elvis c) Prince
a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

8 What is the name of the loggerhead turtle that was released into the Atlantic Ocean on September 3?


12

10

ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 29.

4

6

9

9 What plane was pilot Chuck Yeager flying when he broke the sound barrier?
a) Beautiful Bessie
b) Glamorous Glennis
c) Smooth Sally
a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

10 True or false? Holding a sea sponge makes it easier for bottlenose dolphins to use echolocation.
True ☐ False ☐

11 In the book *Dream*, Idalee is an aspiring musician looking to buy what kind of instrument?
a) Guitar
b) Piano
c) Saxophone
a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

12 What was the name of the Everybody's Golf video game series when it was first introduced in North America?

13 In this year's Waterlily Weigh-Off, how many pounds of weight did the winning plant hold?
a) 103 b) 143 c) 183
a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

14 True or false? The Golden State Valkyries are the first WNBA franchise to make the playoffs in their first season.
True ☐ False ☐

15 Conservationists in Australia have taught dogs to ride paddleboards to look for what animals?

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The Week Junior (ISSN 2689-9027) is published weekly, except January 3, January 10, July 11, and September 12. *The Week Junior* is published by Future US LLC, 130 West 42nd Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10036.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices.
POSTMASTERS: Send change of address to *The Week Junior,* PO Box 37595, Boone, IA 50037-7595.

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A BIG CHAMPION FOR LITTLE SEAHORSES

When Neil Garrick-Maidment was 14, he had his dream job—working at an aquarium! One time his boss was struggling to keep baby seahorses alive, so Neil took some home to give them extra attention. What started as a single tank in his house in Exeter, England, eventually grew to 26 tanks full of seahorses.

"It did overwhelm the house," Neil said. "The hallway ... the basement ... tanks were everywhere." That's when he decided to open the world's first seahorse-only aquarium. Over the last 50 years, Neil estimates he's raised hundreds of thousands of seahorses. That's a lot of babies!

Neil also spent a lot of time visiting seahorses in the wild, including the cold waters around the UK, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. People used to think seahorses only lived in tropical places, but Neil proved they could thrive in colder climates too.

Neil has spent his life helping these amazing creatures. He convinced the UK government to protect two seahorse species and started The Seahorse Trust to help seahorses worldwide. Way to go, Neil!

Want to hear more? Check out Neil's story on the podcast Constant Wonder KIDS—look for the episode "Get Curious About Seahorses." And don't miss other episodes about awesome nature heroes!

Scan the QR code to listen with your family

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THE WEEK Junior

GRAND PRIZE
Ages 8–10
SIMON

In Simon's words:
"This photograph of a grasshopper living in our flowers shows the beauty of nature and how humans should live peacefully alongside it."

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